

Unified English Braille Fact Sheet for School Administrators and Special Education Supervisors

In January, 2016, the United States changed from the braille code "English Braille American Edition" (EBAE) to start using "Unified English Braille" (UEB), a revision and extension of the current code. UEB, used in eight English-speaking countries, has fewer exceptions and is less ambiguous than current code. As a result, UEB is more computable for transcribing from print to braille, and better for "backtranslation" from braille to print. This fact sheet lists information for school administrators about the transition to UEB and its impact on instruction.

- UEB eliminated nine contractions from current code, changed some symbols, and added others so it more closely reflects the original print text without ambiguity. Students who already use braille will need to learn these changes and new symbols.
- UEB changed some contraction rules so they are simpler to use and have fewer exceptions. This means that some contractions are used more often than they are with the old code. Students who already use braille will need to learn these new rules and apply them when they write braille.
- Teachers of students with visual impairments need direct service time with students who know EBAE to teach the changes and ensure proficiency in reading and writing braille using UEB.
- Statewide and district-wide assessments will need to reflect the change to UEB. Considerations for students who already use current code and are making the transition to UEB should be addressed on the IEP.
- Beginning readers will start learning UEB starting in the 2016 school year. New materials created for beginning readers should be transcribed in UEB.
- Braille translation software for UEB is available, and most portable braille devices are already compatible.
- The entire United States is engaged in making the transition to UEB. National organizations such as the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) are producing instructional materials in UEB as rapidly as possible but some lag in provision of UEB materials can be expected. In many cases, only new transcriptions will be in UEB and older materials will not be re-transcribed.
- Teachers of students with visual impairments require training in the new rules and symbols in UEB. Training opportunities can be found online and through face-to-face seminars; a list of manuals and seminars can be found: <http://www.brailleauthority.org/ueb.html#learn>. Release time for teachers and for paraprofessionals who support braille instruction will be needed.
- The Council of Chief State School Officers has developed an implementation guide for UEB which can be found on their web site: http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Programs/Supporting_Students_with_Disabilities.html.